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Superintendent

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HORNE'S "ARIZONA LEARNS" REVISIONS UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED BY STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

SCHOOL PERFORMANCE LABELS NOW MORE FAIR, ACCURATE

PHOENIX (Tuesday, September 16, 2003) – The Arizona State Board of Education has unanimously approved significant changes advocated by Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Horne to the Arizona Learns (AZ Learns) school accountability system. The changes will more accurately reflect the performance of Arizona schools based on testing data.

"This is a much-needed change to the "AZ Learns" accountability system for several reasons," Horne said. "It corrects injustices from last year in which good schools located in economically disadvantaged areas were unfairly labeled as underperforming. Many of those schools will now be recognized for doing a good job."

"This new system will also give proper focus to the many positive things happening in Arizona schools. Approximately 300 schools (about 26% of the total number of schools statewide) will be labeled as either "highly performing" or "excelling." Last year, only two schools were recognized as such. By measuring achievement more accurately, Arizona will have a much better picture of those schools that are highly performing or excelling."

"The importance of this can't be overstated. It's vital that schools are labeled accurately so we know who the achievers are. That boosts morale among those educators who are doing a first-rate job and it sends a message to businesses considering moving to Arizona of the accurate information that Arizona's public school system is first-rate."

"By making these changes, the number of Arizona schools classified as underperforming will decline from 19% to 13.5%. In every case, the improvements will be justified by virtue of higher test scores, or correcting the injustice of unfairly labeled schools."

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Under the new AZ Learns model schools will be labeled one of five ways:

- **Excelling:** A school that demonstrates optimal student performance.
- **Highly Performing:** A school that exceeds the state's expectations with regard to student proficiency in reaching the state's academic standards, and has a predetermined number of students exceeding the standard.
- **Performing:** A school that meets the state's expectations with regard to student proficiency in reaching the state's academic standards.
- **Underperforming:** A school in need of improvement in its academic performance.
- **Failing to Meet Academic Standards:** A school receiving three consecutive underperforming classifications that have been confirmed by site review.

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